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FACES and OPEN DOORS

by
AGNES
LEE





Hazel Thane Semmers

from

Sophie Kauss.

Easter - '23

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5

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7

FACES AND OPEN DOORS

FACES AND OPEN DOORS

by

AGNES LEE



**RALPH FLETCHER SEYMOUR
PUBLISHER
FINE ARTS BUILDING,
CHICAGO**

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by
Ralph Fletcher Seymour

THIS book contains many of my recent poems, and I have selected and revised others, from my former volumes, to bear them company.

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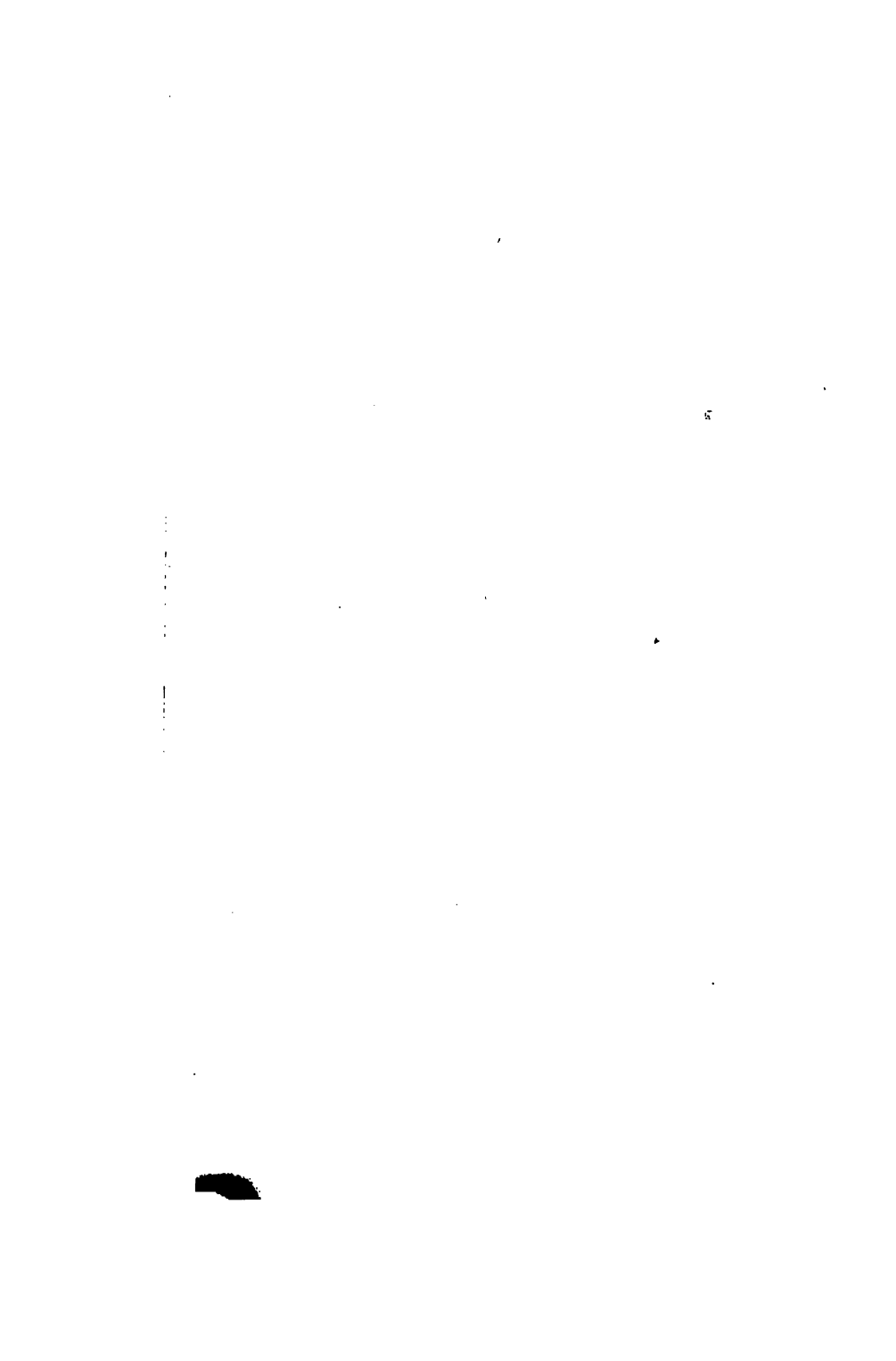
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I

2 2 2

FACES AND OPEN DOORS

I

AN OLD WOMAN WITH FLOWERS

I like to see the eager-faced old woman
Walking at sunset down the city street.
Always she holds against her heart with
fervor
Her sprays of meadow-sweet.

She passes daily, and I never see her
Without the flowers she gathers to her so.
I do not know how destiny softens,
hardens
The ways her feet must go,

Nor what her eyes forever are beholding
Beyond the sordid walls and grimy towers,
Nor what against her aged heart she
presses,
Pressing the meadow flowers.

OLD LIZETTE ON SLEEP

Bed is the boon for me!
It's well to bake and sweep,
But hear the word of old Lizette:
It's better than all to sleep.

Summer and flowers are gay,
And morning light and dew;
But agèd eyelids love the dark
Where never a light seeps through.

What!—open-eyed, my dears,
Thinking your hearts will break?
There's nothing, nothing, nothing, I say,
That's worth the lying awake!

I learned it in my youth—
Love I was dreaming of!
I learned it from the needle-work
That took the place of love.

I learned it from the years
And what they brought about;
From song, and from the hills of joy
Where sorrow sought me out.

It's good to dream and turn,
And turn and dream, or fall
To comfort with my pack of bones,
And know . . . nothing at all!

Yes, never know at all
If prowlers mew or bark,
Nor wonder if it's three o'clock
Or four o'clock of the dark.

When the longer shades have fallen
And the last weariness
Has brought the sweetest gift of life,
The last forgetfulness,

If a sound as of old leaves
Stir the last bed I keep,
Then say, my dears: "It's old Lizette—
She's turning in her sleep."

BARK-BOUND

In her home a woman I know
Is a bark-bound tree;
The flowers bloom at her feet,
But she does not see.

The knife has glittered by
To the forest to prune,
And left her deaf to the wind,
Blind to the moon.

She must live on her sap
In her ease and dark,
Until she shrivels and dies
In her walls of bark,—

Unless the glittering knife
Should return her way,
And set its steel to the bark,
And let in day.

THE SWEEPER

Frail, wistful guardian of the broom,
The dwelling's drudge and stay,
Whom destiny gave a single task—
To keep the dust away!

Sweep off the floor and polish the chair.
It will not always last.
Some day, for all your arms can do,
The dust will hold you fast.

CONVENTION

The snow is lying very deep,
My house is sheltered from the blast.
I hear each muffled step outside,
I hear each voice go past.

But I'll not venture in the drift
Out of this bright security,
Till enough footsteps tread it down
To make a path for me.

THE BROKEN CHAIN

How the wind blew,
And the snow threw
Its ermine softness at my window-pane!
Now I am there again,
In the old house as once on a winter night.
About the rooms I stray,
A stranger, yet at home forevermore.
A creak of the floor—
Why, here comes Natalie,
Here's Gordon tiptoeing to me,
Holding his candle high.
Children, children, I have come back—
yes, I!

What has become of the house I have
forsworn?
What other living shades
Bring their new happiness to room and
hall?
I see them not at all,
As here I sit, a mother miles away,
And roam the rooms and roam the rooms
till morn.

MRS. MALOOLY

Mrs. Malooly has gone to her rest,
Who scrubbed Manhattan's marble aisles.
She has forgotten, forgotten, forgotten
The mop and broom
And the patterned tiles.

Mrs. Malooly has gone to her rest
In the smooth-dug loam, to a rest so deep
She has forgotten, forgotten, forgotten
The unmade bed
And the whiskey sleep.

THE JILT

I

Let other feet go drudging
About the house he built!
A free girl, a jilted girl,
I'm glad he was a jilt.

We quarrelled till it almost
Destroyed my breath of life.

He nagged me and bullied me,
As if I'd been his wife.

II

We grew cold and bitter
The more we would explain,
And if we held our tongues
The worse it was again.

He flashed a cruel sign,
I flashed a cruel word,
And neither could forget
The blame the other heard.

III

But his eyes could be tender with love, and
his voice, how tender!
Some words he sang are with me the whole
day through.
I hang out the linen and burnish the brass
and copper,
And they won't go out of my head, what-
ever I do.

Strange how they come when I feel alone
and forsaken,
How they wake me up when the dawn in
my room is hazy,

How they drug me asleep when the night
has darkened my pillow!—
Ah, a song will sing in your head when
your heart is crazy!

IV

What can I do but sit here and shake,
And let the windows rattle mournfully,
While Sunday brings him never and
Monday brings him not,
And winter hides the town away from
me?—

Dreaming how he drew my soul from
my lips,
Seeming just to hear forevermore
What my heart tells the clock, what the
clock tells my heart,
Dreaming back the springtime at my door?

V

Why should I curl my hair for him?
He said the trouble couldn't be mended,
He said it must be good-by and go,
And he took up his hat, and all was ended.
So all was over. And I'm not dead!
And I've shed all the tears I'm going to
shed!

And now he's wanting to come again?
Perhaps he's sorry, perhaps he misses
The hill-top girl. Well, let him come!
But no more love and no more kisses.
Whatever the future, gay or grim,
Why should I curl my hair for him?

VI

I shall go out in the sun to-day,
I don't know whether to laugh or pray.
For along the waking paths of spring
Bird calls to bird till the branches ring.

Something stirs me—spring's own will—
To wander to the edge of the hill,
Where I can see as I look down
Patches of green on the gray old town.

IN THE MORGUE

She who walked with flaming dress
And the gems of idleness,

She who counted in her troop
Young man Dream and old man Dupe,

Comes at last to lay her head
Here among the unclaimed dead.

She was weary as the sages
With the riddle of the ages,

Saying to midnight: "Whether or no,
Half the world is builded so;"

Saying to morn: "Come do your
mocking!—
But there's money in my stocking!"

Now, with strong, insistent voice
Calling, urging to the choice,

More than gems or loves that were,
The stern sea has tempted her.

THE LONELY GIRL

Alone to walk, alone to weep,
Alone to face the final sleep!

I heard the music of the trees
Forever choiring in the breeze,

And in the woods the flowers that mass
And shake afar their bells of glass.

On a high tower I set my light,
And waited, waited through the night.

I set my signal over me.
But no one passed upon the sea.

RAINDROPS

She thought the rain would surely bring
His dear familiar tap,
Earth's every little upward thing
Wore such a silver cap.

She knew he loved the raindrops, and
She blessed the gleaming gems,
Or laughed to think his forehead crowned
With such cool diadems.

Upon the path she heard them beat,
And whispered low his name.
Sometimes she took them for his feet,
His feet that never came.

She heard them falling in the rills,
And wept for what might be,
Nor caught the music on the hills
Of other destiny.

THE WANDER-WOMAN

I roam the town and woods
From height to height securely.
And if I love no man,
I love no woman, surely.
Oh, give me day and the golden sun
And night with never a goal,
And never a love that's worth the love,
But the love of a child's young soul!

Rains, rains, rains!
The waters claim each other,
The heaven-lost waters march
Back to the sea, their mother.

There's always a roof till clearing comes
And we roam from sun to sun.
They are more than the price of a crust
and bed,
The smiles of my little one.

The tide beats out the hour,—
The turbulent reminder!
Humans we meet are kind,
The birds and beasts are kinder.
Then up the road and over the wild,
And through the darkest door,
With ever and ever a little child
That skips and trips before.

~ ~ ~

II

~ ~ ~



II

THE ANCIENT SINGER

The wonder of our century!
They sing it stave on stave,
They sing it loud, they sing it long,
New voices, risen brave.

The ring of it, the thrill of it,
Is over every sea;
And some are great enough to sing,
And some have missed the key.

But I must be content to stand
Upon an old highway
And sing the sleeping centuries
Whose dreams are towers to-day.

A STATUE IN A GARDEN

I was a goddess till the marble found me.
Wind, wind, delay not!
Waft my spirit where the laurel crowned
me!

Will the wind stay not?

Then tarry, tarry, listen, little swallow!
A past glory feeds me—
I lay upon the bosom of Apollo!
Not a bird heeds me.

For here the days are alien. Oh, to waken
Mine, mine, with calling!
But on my shoulders bare, like hopes
 forsaken,
The dead leaves are falling.

The sky is gray and full of unshed weeping
As dim down the garden
I wait and watch the early autumn
 sweeping.
The stalks fade and harden.

The souls of all the flowers afar have
 rallied.
The trees, gaunt, appalling,
Attest the gloom, and on my shoulders
 pallid
The dead leaves are falling.

MOTHERHOOD

Mary, the Christ long slain, passed
 silently,
Following the children joyously astir
Under the cedrus and the olive-tree,
Pausing to let their laughter float to her.
Each voice an echo of a voice more dear,
She saw a little Christ in every face.

Then came another woman gliding near
To watch the tender life which filled the
 place.

And Mary spoke to her: "I know thee not,
And yet I know the same heart-hunger-
 ings send

Our footsteps here; for the children bring
 us back

Something . . . something we lost.

 O stranger, friend,

 "I, too, have rocked my lovely One.

And He was fair!

He was more luminous than the sun,

And like its rays through amber was

His sun-bright hair.

Still I can see it shine and shine."

"Even so," the woman said, "was
 mine."

"His ways were ever darling ways"—
And Mary smiled—
"So soft, so clinging! All our days
Were jewels strung on cords of love.
My Little Child!
My vanished star! My music fled!"
"Even so was mine," the woman said.

And Mary whispered: "Tell me, thou,
Of thine." And she:
"Oh, mine was rosy as a bough
Blooming with roses, and his eyes
Had lights of the sea!
His balmy fingers left a thrill
Deep in my breast that warms me
still."

Then she gazed down some wilder, darker
hour,
And said—when Mary questioned,
knowing not,
"Who art thou, mother of so sweet a
son?"—
"I am the mother of Iscariot."

BACH AT THE ORGAN

He gropes amid the gray
Of the shadowy loft. Ascending,
He sees the angels bending
To light the old stairway.

Enthroned before the keys,
The humble citizen
Builds for a world of men
A world of harmonies.

Oh, eager, sensitive hands!
What now are earthly kings?
King by heaven's grace, he flings
The full tone that expands

Till sound-paths newly trod
Lead up the heights of wonder,
And in the organ's thunder
Thunders the voice of God.

CLAUDE DEBUSSY

Man's music changes
With the changing of his hours,
Though birds trill the same songs
They trilled from Petra's towers.

Always
From ancient hallways
He led through beauty's ample rooms,
Out to her rain-drenched flower and
frond,
Out to her suns . . . beyond . . . beyond.
Ah! did we call his art a whim,
Before we woke to him?

High above war
His music, rising past the stars,
Is heard at heaven's door.
Heaven opens to the soul of song,
And to an art which never ends
The soul of song ascends.

SHAKESPEARE

Because, the singer of an age, he sang
The passions of the ages,
It was humanity itself that leaped
To life upon his pages.

He told no single being's tale—he forced
All beings to his pen.
And when he made a man to walk the
street
Forth walked a million men.

THE SINGER OF THE SHADOWS

*If I could dwell
Where Israfel
Hath dwelt, and he where I,
He might not sing so wildly well
A mortal melody,—
While a bolder note than this might swell
From my lyre within the sky.*

—Edgar Allan Poe.

From far beyond all death, beyond all
dark,

Fateful, sublime,
The singer of the shadows came to mark
His land, his time.

Poet of grief, he sought her loneliest cave,
Her ultimate aisle,
Her ruined keep, her moldering
architrave
And peristyle.

Poet of tombs, the midnight was his
theme.

Adventuring far,
He pierced the opal center of a dream,
Or of a star.

Let those who walk with lore the beaten
road

From others ask
The daily bread of thought, cheer for the
load,
Sun for the task.

There is an hour when sunshine brings to
pain
Unfaith, unrest,
When she would feel the footfalls of the
rain
Upon her breast.

Then, circled in a misty aureole,
His charm distils
A craved narcotic for the fevered soul,
From sorrow's hills.

Now for the hidden miles his wandering
pressed
Sweet is our soil.
His dust has come to bloom, the light has
blessed
The darkness of his toil.

England acclaims him. France, attuned,
aware,
Greets him with bay,

And calls him brother, through her
Baudelaire
And Mallarmé.

Too long have lettered dwarf and
neophyte
Cast him their stones,
Who flesh beheld, not spirit, worked their
blight
Above his bones.

Enough of slander! Bolted be the gate
To evils wild
Envies evolve and lies perpetuate!
Art owns her child.

Cradle him softly, Art! O let him live
Secure, apart,
Who, earthbound, gave you all he had to
give—
His tortured heart!

Pride has departed, Doom has crossed
the door,
Love calls farewell.
But from your firmament forevermore
Shines Israfil!

SONG OF A QUEEN OF LOMBARDY

Only an hour, and his heart was beating.
Now he laughs in a ghostly sheeting,
Still in his dream the sin repeating.

Sea, sea,
Quiet me.
Wash off my crown and my dress.
Throw the weight of your wave,
Cover me with forgetfulness
And let me sleep in my grave!

This is the night the trees were shaken.
This is the night of the soul-forsaken.
This is the night he shall not waken.

Sea, sea,
Quiet me.
Cool of the infinite,
Roll to me, roll to me, roll!
Bury my body's hands of white,
And the crimson hands of my soul!

THE LAST HOME

Apart I lie, below the passing feet,
In the last home at last.
Ah well, in the old days I have been
proud!
Now meekness holds me fast.
I have been friend to power: my face is
graven
On many a coin and ring.
Once to my hearth a lordly praetor came,
And once an orient king.
They left their sounding praises in my
ears,
Their jewels on my breast.
But now in my humility I wait
To house a meaner guest.
Then, little worm, come in! And, Time,
forget
The perfect flower you bore!
Ah yes, I have been proud in the old days!
But I am proud no more.

~ ~ ~

III

~ ~ ~

III

THE QUEST

I am the ancient memory-mother.
I shake my gray locks in the sun,
I shake them out as I run, run.
What are you seeking, weary other?

*Sometimes I almost overtake it,
The dream I lost one day, and then
The dream will slip away again.
The quest is long. Shall I forsake it?*

Follow the trail on, hourly, yearly,
Over the dark in the willow-brook,
Over the dawn; and look, and look,
And close your eyes, to see more clearly.

TWO HOUSES

House of the past, house of the sunken
stair,
In somnolence of long untrodden grass!
Tragedy, pleasure, sin have crossed your
door.

Your crumbling gables are no longer fair,

And all the sigh of all the heaven may pass
Along your desert floor.

And you, the newly-built, firmly set,
Wide-halled, with gleaming porch and
peristyle,

You, with your shining gables sound and
whole!

What shall you say, O house of no regret,
Proud in your strength, but with an
ignorant smile

Still waiting for your soul!

TEARING THE OLD HOUSE DOWN

They are tearing the old house down.

The roof makes way for the sky.

With hammering blows on rooms and
halls

They hush the voices within the walls,
Hush, hush, hush,—

For the old, the old must go.

Fall, cornice and beam!

Up, hearthstone and floor!

They had battered a door almost in two

When a little ghost with a doll pushed
through . . .
Perhaps it is better so . . .
For the old, the old must go.

BEFORE SLEEP

O child of struggle, here's the night!
Then rest, then rest.
Let peace come nestle on your brow.
Put out the light—

Nor back to the old battle hark.
Draw down the shades,
Put out the light. And in your soul
Put out the dark.

THE DREAM CHILD

What fragrance is here
In this house on the wild
That nevermore thrills
To the step of a child?—

Some shred of a dream
Love may never retake,
That drifted away
And left in its wake

The warmth of a presence,
The rays of a light?
I know only this:
She was with me last night.

CLOUD AND FLOWER

I saw the giant stalking to the sky,
The giant cloud above the wilderness,
Bearing a mystery too far, too high
For my poor guess.
So I turned away,
Saying: "I have had enough of mystery!"

Now something little, intimate, shall
speak."

A bright rose stirred.

And long I looked into its face, to see
A simple revelation of the hour.

.....

And I had thought to turn from mystery—
But O, flower! flower!

A NESTING LINNET

Skyward above the mist and heather
She and her nimble comrades flew.
The clearest note the morning knew
Was hers, when, rallying down the blue,
They circled in the sun together.

Since then, with but a flower's tassel,
An osier blown across the moor,
To make her fateful walls secure,
With symmetry how graced and sure
She wove her garnerings to a castle!

No outer import shall entrance her.
The comrades skim the hillock's brow

To maple bough, to willow bough,
And, near her darkened chamber, now
They call her, and she will not answer.

She was so shy with every human
Before she nested in our tree.
Now she forgets the wilder wood,
Glad to be small and understood.

NOVEMBER 11, 1918

Suddenly bells and flags!
Suddenly—door to door—
Tidings! Can we believe,
We, who were used to war?

Yet we have dreamed of Peace,
Knowing her light must be,
Knowing that she must come.
Look—she comes, it is she!

Tattered her raiment floats,
Blood is upon her wings.
Ah, but her eyes are clear!
Ah, but her glad heart sings!

Soon where the shrapnel fell
Petals will wake and stir.
Look—she is here, she lives!—
Beauty has died for her.

/

A BLINDED SOLDIER DICTATES A
LETTER

I know you only by your tears. . .
I felt them falling on my hair. . .
I had wakened in a hush of dark
Upon a cot, I knew not where.

Dear lady, I was full of dread,
And bitter with my destiny.
And then—the feel of your soft dress,
And you were bending over me.

Ah! the warm touches of your soul
Guided me to the shadowed years,—
Light of my dark forever,—though
I know you only by your tears!

WAVE, WAVE

Wave, wave,
You seem to be dreaming—
Wave, wave—
In the sunshine warm.
Wave, wave,
What are you, what are you—
Wave, wave—
Of the changing form?

*I am a round bright beautiful wave.
All day with my ripples the shore I pave.*

Wave, wave,
They say you are pitiless—
Wave, wave—
When the ships outroam.
Wave, wave,
They call you a savior—
Wave, wave—
When the ships come home.

*I have no thought for a life or a grave.
I am a round bright beautiful wave.*

THE WRECK

See, there the wreck is lying—a league
from shore!

The crew were feasting when the crash
was heard.

One long vibration, and the ship was
calm,

Till faces cut the fog along the deck.

And then the sun came out upon a pale,
Gray field of glass, while darkly here and
there

Life's lovers rose and sank, or desperately,
With curses, clung to timbers that
betrayed.

I wonder, was there one among them all
Who had waited for the signalling of
chance,

Who hailed the shock, and pierced the
deep with praise?

A HINT OF SPRING

Drops of rain and drops of sun,
And the air is amber spun.
From the winter's coma pass
Gleaming shivers over the grass.
Sparks of memory
Flash upon the soul;
While a roadway child
Thrusts arbutus, gay
From a valley full of bloom.
Earth's exultant hope finds room,
And the poorest, in the shower,
Longs to buy a little flower.

THE CHANGELING

I met a threadbare waif below the town.
His eyes were sad, and from his dusty
coat
Roses no longer crimson drooped and fell;
Pebbles which had been kisses bound his
throat.

He held a cup and listlessly drank wine,
As one who knew not what he was drink-
ing of.
And when I asked his name he answered
low:
“My name is Habit—once they called me
Love.”

THE SIGN

Her smiling is the sun for me,
Though in her eyes the rain-floods dwell.
For I, who know her heart so well,
Through love's divining,
Can see the sudden sign, can see,
Like to a gold-swept amethyst
Within the sunlight and the mist
Love's rainbow shining.

LONG DISTANCE LINE

More wonderful than all my joy was this:
To know the sudden nearness of his mood,
To know that for a moment we, apart,
Together stood.

That same low voice across my garden-
beds
Might not have reached my ear, for wind,
or bird.
But it has spoken across a thousand miles!
And I have heard!

ASPIRATION

The running waves sigh,
The cliffs are so high!
The rising cloud weeps,
So high the star creeps!
And you, little heart,
You are misty with tears
As the opaline star,—
Love's face is so far!

AT-DAWN

They were all around me.
Soft as petals shaken
Summer faces bound me
In a balmy zone.
It is strange to waken
And be alone.

Outer sounds pierce coldly.
Day begins to battle.
Wheels come . . . faintly . . . boldly,
Crunching through the ice,
And the milk-jars rattle,
Like frozen dice.

Let me turn a moment
To fathom one more dream,
Find the warm seduction
Of a grove in flower . . .
Drain the dregs of slumber . . .
Forego the hour.

THE ILEX TREE

What spirit touched the faded lambrequin
And slept? The crumbling doorway's
 lintel, rosed
With age, overlooks a stunted ilex tree
Grown in the middle path. Its branches
 guard
The house in silence, or with green dark
 gesture
Spreading protection, whisper pleadingly:
"The past is asleep behind the lambrequin.
Do not go in.
The door is closed."

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IV

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IV

NUMBERS

Numbers are so much the measure of everything that is valuable that it is not possible to demonstrate the success of any action or the prudence of any undertaking without them.

Steel, Spectator, No. 174

In all they brood,
The inexorable!
Out of primeval shadow they have stood
In judgment over all.
They brook not, these,
Earth's gainsay, nor the sea's,
Arbiters of our more, our less,
Our nothingness.
Apart, a few,
They merge, divide,
Or, gathering in multitudes anew
Spread forth in armies.
Their ancient law
Still rules the world,
Bids science halt or dare,
Bids art beware.

Fact's own they are,
Yet, counselling dream,
Bright wings for thought's invasion of a
star,

Fins for the diver's gleam,
Unerring eyes
To pierce the hidden skies,
Unerring feet to enter
The rock's dark center.

With lamps upheld,
Austere and strong
They wait behind the Muses. Sun-
impelled

Apollo never outruns
Their fleet throng.
They guard a million suns!
Mindful to mold a sapling's grace,
A lily's face.

They forge the curse
Of ways unlit.
They are the heartbreak of the universe.
They are the joy of it.
Unseeing we pass
Their pattern in the grass.
But we are theirs, and they defy Eternity.

TWO CANALS

The old canal forlorn, forsaken crawls,
Its locks decayed and its low water stirred
By minnows, all its past ensepulchred
In whispering walls.

Here mystery holds the moments with
delight.

The banks are dark with groves; the
paths, half blotted,
Struggle along the edges, bramble-knotted,
Scentful as night.

The rough-hewn chasm is never entered
now.

The steep walls, viny with forgetfulness,
Out from their crevices push flower and
cress

And greening bough.

And parallel, and half a mile away,
The new canal, a broad deep channel,
reaches

Across the prairie where the sunshine
 bleaches
The grass all day.

Its lines are open to the eye and clear.
New minds laid out the granite with new
 science,
And new invention wrought for time's
 defiance
The perfect gear.

Soon it shall bear high steamers on its
 breast;
Soon, with the shedding forth of its
 renown,
River shall tell to river, town to town
The world's unrest.

Ah, but a tree, a vine, a rose? Not one!
The banks stretch out monotonous and
 bare.

Naked and smooth the peerless walls
 upglare
At the set of sun.

Men of to-day, build strong! The price
we know.
Bring to the land new steel, new stone,
new faces!
But it's in the crannies of the old, old
places
The flowers grow.

THE FORSAKEN PATH

How clear the young path wore,
So fast and eagerly
Morning and evenfall
Friendship sped!
But fateful words were spoken,
And now from door to door
Inimical eyes peer out,
Rancor-fed.

Soon shall the golden-green
Tall grasses cover it,
The clover be aware
And uncloset.

Where footsteps are forgotten
The bergamot shall flame,
Or the petalled symmetry
Of a rose.

O path, O path! I wonder . . .
Is nothing ever lost,
No hasty utterance,
No black hour?
In rains unknown to us
Drenched as the roots of love
Shall even enmity
Bear its flower?

ON THE JAIL STEPS

Young man, I'm free!
Young man, I'm new!
Old Sallow-face,
Good-luck to you!

I've served my term,
I've paid for sin.
And you come out,
As I go in.

Ten years! But, lad,
I am free, free!
Ten years of dark
Shall gather me.

My wife—long years
She wept her pain.
She cannot smile,
She weeps again.

My little child
Shall know my call.
There is no child,
For sin grows tall.

Who are you, now,
Spar of hell's flood?
And who, and who,
But your own blood?

THE KEEPER OF THE LOCK

"The rich are talking of their money's
worth,
And the quiet lock must go.
They're going to choke our blue canal to
death
With a road for public show.

I've let the narrow boats slip in and out
These thirty years. They'll mock
Our peacefulness with every hoot of hell,"
Said the keeper of the lock.

"I love the lock with its banks of moss and
flowers,"
Said the daughter Marjory,
"But the days are dull with never an
outward sign.
Now the world will come to me.

I shall be glad to hear new voices call,
To discover some new face,
I shall be glad to have a little fling
In this wide and silent place."

Said the keeper of the lock, as he shook his
head:

“The lock is life to me.”

“It will be good to know a bit of life,”

Said the daughter Marjory.

EVENING

Over the house the evening settled down.

The little phaeton stood before the door.

Out came her husband, strong and

weather-tanned:

“Why, Judith, what on earth are you
waiting for?”

He stroked the dappled pony—“And the
boy?—

I thought you’d gone.”

“We were just starting, when
Will heard a droning, and he said to me:

‘It’s from the mine—I know the sound.

The men

Forgot to shut things off—I’ll go and see.

Mother, you take the reins and wait a bit—

I won't be long.' And he's been gone at
least
Three quarters of an hour. And here
I sit."

"He knows what he's about," said Alan.

"Well,

There's time enough, Jude. Why, it
isn't eight!

You might stay out a little longer time,
Taking the road around by Foster's Gate.
I'm glad Will's learning how to run the
mine.—

Here we've a coal-mine right on our own
place,

And it'll go to him some day. How fine
He is! It can't help showing in his face.
I thought he might come home half-

heartedly,

Feeling himself too tall for us, somehow
Grown different in his ways, and wishing
us . . .

Well . . . more . . . more"

"Alan, don't talk nonsense, now!
You might have known he'd never change
at all.

They couldn't make him love us any less,
Not all the colleges your tongue could
name."

"You're right enough, you're right enough,
I guess."

"He'd rather take his mother for a drive
Than be the governor of Illinois!
That's what your son is like.—Why,
there's the moon!
Alan, step back and see what keeps the
boy."

And Alan, young at fifty, straight and
proud,
Strode from the narrow box-path's mossy
tiling
Over the lawn, under the cooling branches,
And he was humming to himself, and
smiling;
For all the scent and sound of evening
mingled
In one voice, singing, "Our son!" The
high grain-stack,

Crowned by the moon, where the long
pasture ended,
Sang out, "Our son!" And his heart sang
it back.

He entered through a doorway in the
ground.

Down in the mine he groped his way about,
Calling, "Ho—Will!" But there was no
responding.

And still went echoing Alan's shout on
shout.

Now like a menacing troop of giant ills
Dark in the mine loomed shadowy shapes
of steel.

Dark in his brain a dream of dread arose.

A darker something whirled upon a wheel.

Agèd at fifty, he came out. No more
Was any singing, for to him the air
Was hushed forever, and earth's loveliness
Sent up in vain its fragrance everywhere.
Feeble and faint, at last he reached the
lawn—

One thought, to be with her. He
stumbled, fell,

And staggered up again, and almost ran—
He must make haste with what he had to
tell.

She waited, waited, looking and not
seeing,
Deep in a plan of trimming for a blouse.
He stood there—and she knew, before he
said:
“Come, Jude, get down, come dear, come
in the house.”

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THE SILENT HOUSE

A late afternoon in autumn. The cottage living-room of a scholar. The windows at the back look through a wood to the waters of a wide lake. David is sitting before the fire, his head bowed low over a letter crumpled in his hand.

DAVID:

How may a letter bring such darkness
down!

(He reads from the letter)

*Corinna dallies with your faith too long.
And my word is the word of other men:
She has no soul, no soul, for all her song!
Why is it hearts like yours are always tied
To little hearts that never comprehend?
She may not take your measure nor your weight,
Yet holds you hers to harrow to the end.
You ask me if I see her. Many a night
For many an hour I've seen her. David, man,
I wish that you had watched her with my eyes.
She led the dance, she led the caravan
Of arbiters who came to hear her sing.
Wine to her head were their too eager words.
She circled round within a fiery ring,*

*And flashed the brighter out of every blaze.
But since the last bethronged levee, I hear,
Her doors are closed to all. A chill, they say.
Some whisper, too, that she is gone from town.*

*(With an impatient gesture he throws the
letter into the fire, and watches it burn. A
long pause. He looks up, musing.)*

Forsaken, empty house upon the hill!
Oh, it was there she found her quiet self!
Why will she never know it, and return
To windows calling her from her unrest
To look on silver lake, on flower and fern?

(Dreamily)

Oh, for her nearness at the sunset's glow!
To walk with her under perpetual trees,
To share with her a stillness, to inspire
The ardor in her eyes no other sees!

MARTHA *(Entering with flowers)*:

Sir, I have brought you flaming early
asters

To give a bit of gladness to the room.
And where I found them? Now you'll
never guess!—

In the meadow by the hill—and all in
bloom.

I gathered till my arms were brimming
over.

DAVID:

The meadow of the little silent house!

MARTHA:

The city lured her from her viny door.
But see, the flowers have stayed.

DAVID:

They seem to drowse
And dream of one they lost, a paler flower.

MARTHA:

Then up I went close by the house. The
blinds
Are fast of late and all are intergrown
With weedy havoc, as if no one minds.

DAVID:

How somber the sky has grown! A heavy
rain
Is in the air.

MARTHA:

I'll light the lamps.

DAVID:

Not yet.—

Leave me the beauty of the twilit hour.

MARTHA (*At the window*):

Hear the wind rising! How the moorings
fret!

More than a simple shower is on its way.
I would not be aboard of yonder ship,
Hunted and hammered in the angry lake.
Oh look, Oh look, Oh see it turn and dip!
The helpless thing heads blindly on its
path.

Now it goes plunging desperately under!
Now it goes rearing, like a frightened
horse!

DAVID:

What craft is this, and from what port, I
wonder.

I can see figures.

MARTHA:

Can you see a light?

DAVID:

Now I see nothing. All is overcast.
Here's the beginning of the rain, ah, hear
it!

MARTHA:

God help the ships, the ships! No light,
no mast.

A dim gray doom has swallowed every-
thing.

God save the ships, the ships from the
devil's mark!

(She goes out)

DAVID:

Corinna! Now I may recall her face.
It is my light to think by in the dark. . .
Yes, all my years of study, all the will
Tenacious to achieve, the tempered strife,
The victories attained through many a
failure,
Lie at the door of one dear human life.
And yet . . . the letter . . . Oh, to
break a spell
Where all my stars are crumbling into
dust!
There never was a hope,—ah, well I know!
I struggle on, and love because I must . .

Never a hope? Shall ever anything,
Her silence, or alarm of written word,
Or wild asseveration shake my dream?
She loves me—by love's anguish, I have
heard!
We two from our soul-towers across a
chasm

Are calling each to each, alert, aware.
Shall one of us hail the other on a day,
And no reply be borne upon the air?
Corinna, come to me, my power, my love!
Corinna, come to me, my soul, my breath!
Rise high above the boundaries, and come,
Over grief, gladness,—even over death!

(There is a faint strain of song outside)

Surely a little song I've heard before
Seems striving on the air,—a villanelle,
Half smothered by the gale's mad
roisterers.

Why, that's the song she sang in Bracken
Dell!

How the rain plashes, plashes on the
windows

In heavy drops that presage wilder storm!
The lake is lost within a lurid sheeting;
The house upon the hill has changed its
form.

The melancholy pine-trees weep together.
And what's that clamor at the outer door?
Martha, O Martha! Somebody is
knocking!

MARTHA (*Re-entering*):
The rain in the gutters,—I can hear it
 roar.

DAVID:
No, someone's knocking. If you're deaf,
 I'll go—
This is no night to leave a man outside.

MARTHA (*Muttering*):
And is it I am going deaf a bit,
And blind a bit, with other ill-betide!
Well, I can see to thread a needle still,
And I can hear the ticking of the clock,
And I can fetch a basket from the village.
But hallow me if I have heard a knock!

*(David has thrown open the door. He
starts forward, stretching out his arms.)*

DAVID (*Coming back into the room, as if
drawing someone with him*):

Corinna! You, Corinna! Drenched and
 cold!
At last, at last! But how in all the rain!
Martha!

(Martha stands motionless, unseeing.)

You are growing old, good Martha!
Draw down the shades to hide the
hurricane!
Here, take the dripping cloak out of the
room!
Bring wine—the purple damson is the
best,
And light the lamps, the candles,—fire the
gloom!
Why do you mutter? Woman, here's a
guest.

MARTHA:

You opened wide the door. In came the
storm.
But there was not a step upon the sill.
All the black night let in no living shape.
I see no guest. Look hard, sir, as I will,
I see no one but you and my poor self.

DAVID:

Prepare the room that was my mother's
room,
Spread out warm garments, all the warmth
you find,—

Her gown, the little shawl she used to
wear.

*(Martha, wide-eyed, bewildered, lights the
lamps and candles and goes out, raising her
hands.)*

CORINNA

My moments with you fade and slip. O
David,
Something impelled me to you, some clear
flame!

They said I had no soul, O David, yes,
They said I had no soul! And so I came.
I have been singing, singing all the way,
Singing since everywhere the darkness
grew

And I grew chill and followed the small
light.

Hold me, dear, hold me, let me rest in
you!

DAVID:

Corinna, child, what made you come to me
Out of the silence into my heart's
throbbing?

How did you know the sorrow I was in?

CORINNA:

A flock of leaves went sobbing, sobbing,
sobbing.

DAVID:

The dear old days—they have come back
again.

Corinna,—do you love me?

CORINNA:

O my dear,
I love you, love you!

DAVID:

Little did we guess
Love would come back like this,—I,
dreaming here,
My heart a shaken storm,—the storm
outside
Shaken, shaken,—you, lightning of two
storms.

CORINNA:

O David, your long misery and doubt!

DAVID:

They are the past, they are only shadowy
forms.

CORINNA:

But show me all the shadows.

DAVID:

At first, alone,
I went about lost in a haze of you.
Ah, there were nights with every hour of
lead,
When my despair made nothing great
seem true!
But you would enter softly in the darkness.
I heard your voice, and I could make it say
The little words that bring the tones I
love.

CORINNA:

You felt me loving you.

DAVID:

There would come times
Of other thoughts. How often we have
read
How love reclothes the flowers and the
trees.
And all my world was newly dressed for
me:
Rewards seemed slight, and slighter
penalties,
Daily companionship was more and more.

To clear one path, to lend a hand to pull
One load, was worth the best I had to give.
And you, you had made all things wonderful.

CORINNA:

I have come back to you.

DAVID:

Never to go,—
My festival rekindled from an ember!
But, timid child, how could you come alone
Through all the drenching dark?

CORINNA:

Do you remember?—
Over the summer lake, one silvery,
 starry,
Sweet night, when you and I were drifting,
 dear,
I frighted at the shadow of a lily!
It is all strange, but now I have no fear.

DAVID:

And you, do you remember?—After I
Had pulled the boat ashore, with some
 new might
I held you close. By the moon I could see

Your lips were white with love. Now they
are white.

But oh, your eyes are sleepy! Let them
close.

CORINNA:

I must go over to the silent house.

DAVID:

The dwelling stands forsaken up the steep,
With never beast nor human to arouse!

CORINNA:

My house is waiting for me on the hill.
There in an upper room the rising sun
Shall see strange fingers plying
dexterously,
Drawing the thread in linen newly spun.
Soon all the gloomy windows will be
lighted.

Hark, wheels toil up the hillside heavily!

DAVID:

I will go with you, child, into the dark.

CORINNA:

Strong arms are in the storm to carry me.

DAVID:

Not in these garments dripping as the
boughs!

Not in these clinging shadows!

CORINNA:

Ah, soul-true

Belovèd, I must go in these! To-morrow
I shall be wearing white, all white, for you.

THE STRANGER

Martin works in the garden. Stephana stands at the cottage door. Upon a bench under the eaves are ranged three very small wooden cages, of the sort used by bird-sellers for their stock in trade.

STEPHANA:

What lovelier day could be a holiday!
Come, father, take your leisure.
I brought the birds outside to preen their
wings
And have a bit of pleasure.

MARTIN:

Twelve sold within a week,—and that is
good.

STEPHANA:

And these?

MARTIN:

You never tire
Of birds and birds. You'd like to own
them all.

STEPHANA:

Oh, oh, the silly buyers!—
I, keeping back my dearest three, and
you,
Praising, persuading, driving
Your bargain, like the dear old cheat you
are,
Yet in your soul conniving! (*They laugh*)
(*Soberly*)
No more shall come to buy. And that's
my dream.

MARTIN:

The sun is on the hedges.

STEPHANA:

How all the little upward petals glow!

MARTIN:

Look, there, along the ledges,—
Do you see him now,—that worn and
meager man?
He's in the road . . . He's turning!

STEPHANA:

Perhaps a beggar bothering about.
Well, well, he'll soon be learning
We cannot heed so many passing here.

MARTIN:

See how he stoops and lurches!
Now he has straightened up . . . Why,
coming close,
He seems to be as straight as yonder
birches!
He is even young!

STEPHANA:

No, no, his hair is gray.
He's reached the stile . . . He's over.

MARTIN:

He has a word for us. Now here he comes
Across the field of clover.

*(They nod to the man. He takes off his
cap to them. The birds flutter)*

STEPHANA:

They are trying to say good-morning to
you.

THE STRANGER:

(He walks to the cages)

Birds!

STEPHANA:

My father teaches over there at the
school,
And I'd be often lonely,

Except for these, my beautiful canaries.
All would be happy . . . only . . .
When they begin to love me off they go.

THE STRANGER:
The price, the price, forever.

MARTIN:
But after all, the price is all there is—
We may be fools, or clever,
It is the earthly cry of every being.

THE STRANGER:
Poor birds! No songs embolden
Their breasts. Poor birds! Their eyes
forget the sun.

STEPHANA:
But they are soft and golden.

THE STRANGER:
What narrow cells!

STEPHANA:
Yes, these are narrow homes.
But many are no wider.

THE STRANGER:
Some houses are ample, tall, with skies for
domes,
And beauty for provider.

STEPHANA (*To Martin in a whisper*):
Dread of my heart, the sign is on his brow!
Look, father, he uncreases
His leather pouch . . . look, now he's
 fingering
His horrid silver pieces!

MARTIN (*Whispering to Stephana*):
You'll have a bit of satin home to try.

THE STRANGER:
Birds! Yellow-bright as honey!
Here's all I have—give me the birds. I'll
 pay.

STEPHANA:
Father, don't touch the money!

MARTIN:
Hush, girl! Stranger, there's not a plan I
 make
But she must throw cold water.
The birds are yours, man, and I thank
 you.

THE STRANGER:

Mine!

MARTIN:
Deuce take a whining daughter!

STEPHANA:

But O, whatever is your good of them?

THE STRANGER:

Why this, my Blossom-Lady:—

*Come, Yellow-Throat, come, Puff, and
Speckle-Gem,*

Come leave your little shanties!

*(One after the other he opens the doors of
the cages)*

*Hop, One,
Out of your door.
Fearing no more,
Wing to the sun!*

*Hop, Two!
Sidle along!
Nothing is wrong—
Summer is new.*

*Three, up!
Over the hedge!
Fly to the edge
Of the sun's cup!*

*They are out and away
Over hedge, over hay.
Over hill, over stone*

*They have flashed, they have flown.
They have winged, they have won!
There is gold in the sun!*

MARTIN:

Stop grieving, girl, your tears won't bring
them back.

STEPHANA:

Gone, gone my sweet companions!

THE STRANGER:

Freedom is worth the price of tears. Now,
friends,
I'm off to heights and canyons.

STEPHANA:

Ah, they will die, so high away, so far,
The sport of wind and shadow!

THE STRANGER:

And that is where all creatures ought to
die.

MARTIN:

Plague on his fine bravado!
And yet the birds were his,—he paid, he
paid.
To hell or to the sky
Let him follow them!

STEPHANA:

Go, stranger, go!—Ah, not
Before I have your *why!*

THE STRANGER:

I was their fellow, in my cage, alone,
Born of a world's blaspheming.
I served my term, without a dream at
heart,
But this one song of dreaming:

*If ever you shall be
Where the winds blow,
Make, as you go,
Fettered wings free.*

My cage was opened, little Blossom-
Lady.
I left the dark, the night.
But, free at last, I could not face the
heavens
Till I could share the light.

HER GOING

THE WIFE:

Child, why do you linger beside her portal?
None shall hear you now if you knock or
clamor.

All is dark, hidden in heaviest leafage.
None shall behold you.

TRUTH:

Gone, gone, the dear, the beautiful lady!
I was her comrade, I am here to lament
her.

Ah, the day of her vanishing all things
lovely

Shared in her fleetness!

Tell me her going.

THE WIFE:

You are a child. How tell you?

TRUTH:

I am a child, yet old as the earliest sorrow.
Talk to me as you would to an old, old
woman.

I own the ages.

THE WIFE:

Voices, they say, gossiped around her
dwelling.

She was aware, they say, and, wordless,
departed.

I am glad she is gone. The old hurt
fastens.

Hate is upon me.

It was hard to live down the day, and
wonder,

Wonder why the tears were forever
coming,

Wonder if on his lips I tasted her kisses.

TRUTH:

Woman, be silent!

Jealousy, mad, brooding blind and
unfettered,

Takes its terrible leap over lies and malice.

Who shall question her now in the land of
shadow?

Who shall uphold her?

THE WIFE:

It was hard to know that peace had
forsaken

All my house, to greet with a dull
endeavor
Babe or book, so to forget a moment
I was forgotten.

TRUTH:

Who shall question her now in the land of
shadow,
Question the mute pale lips, and the
marble fingers,
Eyelids fallen on eyes grown dim as the
autumn?
Ah, the beloved!

THE WIFE:

Go, go, bringer of ache and discord!

TRUTH:

Go I may not. Some, they think to
inter me.
Out of the mold and clay my visible
raiment
Rises forever.

THE WIFE:

Hers the sin that lured the light from our
threshold,
Hers the sin that I lost his love and grew
bitter.

TRUTH:

Lost his love? You never possessed it,
woman.

THE WIFE:

Sharp tongue, have pity! . . .

Yes, I knew. But I loved him, hoping
for all.

I said in my heart: "Time shall bring
buds to blossom."

I almost saw the flower of the flame
descending.

Then she came near us.

He is mine, mine, by the laws of the ages!
Mine, mine, mine, yes, body and spirit!
I am glad she has gone her way to the
shadow.

Hate is upon me.

Oh, the bar over which my soul would see
All that eludes my soul! Clouds are
before me!

Clouds are before me! Who shall dispel
the clouds!

For he remembers!

OLD MEMORY

The old man sips his broth and reads his paper before the fire. His daughters whisper at a window. One of them holds a letter.

FIRST DAUGHTER:

I dread his knowing.

SECOND DAUGHTER:

She was his favorite sister,
Older than he, and very far away.
Think of it—no one with her at the last!
Better delay the telling. . . such a
sorrow. . .

FIRST DAUGHTER:

Ah, you remember how he loved our
mother!
And yet, last summer, after she had died
He never seemed to take it hard at all.
He seemed . . . too much resigned
. . . too much himself.
It would have killed him twenty years ago!

SECOND DAUGHTER:

It is the age they come to. Something
goes out,
Goes mercifully out. I often think
They learn to take death as they take
their broth,
Their daily walk, their game of solitaire.

FIRST DAUGHTER:

And you and I, sister? Already youth
Slips far and far behind us. Shall we,
too . . .

SECOND DAUGHTER (*Tearfully*):

How can you say it? How can you say
it? Oh! . . .

FIRST DAUGHTER:

Here comes old Nurse Lucretia up the
street,
Heavy with her dull robes, and hurrying
To be the first to bear the word to him.

SECOND DAUGHTER:

Sign to her, wave her away, wave her
away!
He has seen her close so many dead eyes!

FIRST DAUGHTER:

No,
She has passed along, she was not coming
in.

SECOND DAUGHTER:

Hush, he may hear!

FIRST DAUGHTER:

His mind is on his paper.

SECOND DAUGHTER:

Make some good reason, take the paper
from him

Before he reads . . . the names . . .

Who knows but hers

Might be already there?

FIRST DAUGHTER:

It is too late.

His finger finds the column.

THE OLD MAN (*Calling*):

Here! See here!

Why, Adelaide is dead! My sister

Adelaide!

DAUGHTERS:

O father, father!

THE OLD MAN:

I suppose it's true.

FIRST DAUGHTER:

A letter came. Now read it, deary, read it.

THE OLD MAN:

No, let it wait. So Adelaide is dead!

Well, she was restless—go and go she
must,

First to this place, then that place, till at
last

She settled in Nevada. As for me,
Here I am still, and I shall count my
hundred.

Well, well, well, well, so Adelaide is dead!

THE DOLL

THE FATHER:

There's something strange about the child
tonight.

She stood and smiled as if she might be
dreaming.

THE MOTHER:

This morning I went out to buy the dinner.
I took her with me, for I couldn't leave
her.

Well, she was tired from the time we
started.
We went to see the window-show at
Field's.
Oh my!—the dolls! From the first, one
held her eye—
A girl, a life-size two-year-old, with a dress
Hand-work all over, and silk socks and
slippers.
She looked, and couldn't seem to turn
away.
At last she said: "I want to be its mother."
Then it came to me—what the doctor
told us—
Her heart was queer, and we must humor
her.
So I said: "You'll get it for a Christmas
present."
Anyhow I've had peaceful hours since
then.
She hasn't turned white, nor had a
fainting-spell.
That shows she can be all right if she's a
mind to.
But what on earth'll we say to her
to-morrow?

THE FATHER:

We'll say how Santa Claus got stuck in
the snow.

THE MOTHER:

Now hark, I hear her humming in her bed!
She always hums, and never sings out
words.

The Child's Song they may not hear

I shall hold her very close to me,
With my love.

Oh! could anything more beautiful be
Dreamed of?

She is coming. I must wait,
I must wait.

THE MOTHER:

It's all because I let her go to school.
I never was a one for education
For children of her age. It gives 'em
notions,
And sets 'em looking up too high at things.

THE FATHER:

I'll just go out and look along the street.

The boys have stood a[ll] day there
peddling toys.
I'll buy a little rubber doll for her.

THE MOTHER:

Let her be satisfied with goose for dinner,
And a bag of candy from the school-house
tree.

The Child's Song they may not hear

I shall feel my baby's finger-tips.

Oh, to-morrow!

I shall kiss her on her lovely, darling
lips.

Oh, to-morrow!

She is coming. I must wait,
I must wait.

THE MOTHER:

How can we tell her?—that's what's
bothering me.

How can we tell her, tell her?—answer
that!

Think of the dark she'll have in her eyes
to-morrow,

When she comes looking, and it isn't here!

EASTLAND WATERS

NIELS:

Now girls, now girls, cling on with all
your might.

Cling steady to this plank—don't lose
your grit.

MARY:

Niels, will they all be saved?

NIELS:

Of course they will.

They can't be drowned.

INGRID:

For everything's in sight.

MARY:

And we could almost touch the houses
there.

See how the steamer sank upon her side,
Like a huge beast!

INGRID:

Listen—a baby cried!

NIELS:

Don't turn. Don't listen. Don't look
anywhere.

MARY:

The human fish—see how they haul them
in!

The slimy fish. Oh, this is awful, Niels!

INGRID:

They're everywhere! How cold the water
feels!

NIELS:

Keep up your nerve—be the brave girls
you've been.

MARY:

Soon we'll be safe. Nothing can harm us
here,
With all those little windows looking on.
I feel your courage, Niels—my fear has
gone.

NIELS:

Steady there, steady! Now the dock is
near.

INGRID:

O Niels, I wish I had your arms around
me! . . .
It came, it came! I didn't mean to tell.
Mary, you never dreamed . . . We
kept it well.

Niels thought we mustn't speak it out.

He bound me . . .

NIELS:

Hush, hush!

INGRID:

He bound me not to say a word,
Not to let others guess it in my face.
But who could keep a secret in this place?
And Mary, I am glad at last you've heard.
And Mary, you shall fasten up my veil,
And hold my book for me. Why, every-
thing

Seems wonderful! Even here I want to sing!
We'll have a little flat in Carbondale . . .

NIELS:

Ingrid, don't chatter on like this, I say.
Mary . . . I meant to make it clear to
you . . .

Mary!

INGRID:

Oh, look! oh, look!—her lips are blue!

NIELS:

Mary!

INGRID:

Oh, look! . . . Her hands have
slipped away!

THE ASPHODEL
(*An Episode of Honolulu.*)

I

Mother and Child.

THE CHILD:

What makes the world so beautiful, so
quiet?

THE MOTHER:

Love makes it so.

THE CHILD:

Is love in everything?

THE MOTHER:

Sometimes it hides away from us, but
always,
Somewhere, at every depth its wonders
cling.

THE CHILD:

The world seems very beautiful,
and yet . . .

THE MOTHER:

What yet? What are you thinking of,
little son?

THE CHILD:

I heard the story of a company
Packed close upon a ship,—the lepers.

One

Stood out from all the others, lean and
bold,

Scaly, with eyes that pierced you through
and through.

And when he looked at children they were
frightened.

O mother, tell me that it was not true!

THE MOTHER:

It was not true.

THE CHILD:

And say there are no lepers.

THE MOTHER:

Of course there are no lepers, dear. It is
A sick thought someone put into your
mind.

The world is beautiful.

THE CHILD:

That look of his!

I shut my eyes and can't help seeing it!

THE MOTHER:

What silly stories people often tell!
Lie still. Nothing will happen. Flower-
bells
Are closing. I must draw the curtains
now.
The misty moon is dreaming. In the
garden
The birds are falling asleep on every
bough.

THE CHILD:

Where are my sisters? And the boys,
where are they?

THE MOTHER:

It's May, you know. They've been in the
woods for hours.
Soon they'll be coming home again, my
deary,
For it's late, there's rain in the air.

THE CHILD

Will they bring us flowers?

THE MOTHER:

Ah, they'll bring flowers for you, dear!
As for me,—
You are my flower.

THE CHILD:
Do leper men like flowers?

THE MOTHER:
I said there are no leper men, remember.
O darling, see, your mother's arms are
 round you!
O darling, see how safe you are to-night!
Here is a drink in your own silver cup.
It is more sweet than water, little brother.
Raise your dear golden head and have a
 sip.

THE CHILD:
Another sip. I like it. Now another.

THE MOTHER:
The children have come back! They're
 on the terrace.
They're talking of you, little brother,
 saying
How much they love you. Cuddle close
 and listen,—
I'll sing you what they send you from the
 Maying.

(*She sings.*)
At twilight in the curtained room,

Quite near a Dreamland town,
Upon your little bed, you dear,
A pearly dove lit down,—

Bearing four kisses—they were clothed
As English flowers—and then
He left them gently one by one
And flew away again.

Louise's was a lily-kiss
Upon your shining hair.
I'll touch it: yes, my fingers feel
The lily resting there.

On one the dew was glistening
Like rays from Fairyland.
Hugh gave his loveliest columbine
To blossom in your hand.

And David said his kiss should be
A yellow daffodil.
It nestles on your shoulder now,
Fragrant and soft and still.

And oh—the woodland's dearest flower!—
Fresh from her finger-tips
Stephana sent a sweet wild rose

To lie upon your lips.

THE CHILD:

Four kisses all dressed up as English
flowers! . . .

The dove goes flying off to some high
tower . . .

There is another kiss . . . I feel it,
mother . . .

Not one the dove brought, but a stranger-
flower.

THE MOTHER:

And all within the curtained room,
Watching unseen, apart,
An angel brought an asphodel,
And laid it on your heart.

THE CHILD:

What is the matter with your voice?
. . . Please sing!

I am too sleepy for the words . . .
but sing!

THE MOTHER:

(*She Sings.*)

Who'll know him?

Who'll see him?—

He is so small for Eternity.
God! Hear me!
Christ's mother!
Mother my little one for me!

II

(In the Morning)

The Children. The Mother.

DAVID:

What a long time we've waited at the door!

HUGH:

How still the house is! I can't hear a
sound.

LOUISE:

I have a funny joke I heard, to tell him.

STEPHANA:

I want to give him this blue shell I found.

HUGH:

Why does she make us stay away from
him?

Why does she keep him hidden from us all?

LOUISE:

I saw his face at the window yesterday.

STEPHANA:

Why won't she answer? She must have
heard us call.

LOUISE:

She's coming . . . She's unfastening
the door!

HUGH:

Mother! Mother! You look so strange
and white!

DAVID:

Mother! Where is he? We have come for
him.

THE MOTHER:

Children, your little brother died last
night.





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